

SIDELING HILL AFFAIR:  
The Cumberland County Riots of 1765

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*Ye patriot souls who love to sing,  
What serves your country and your king,  
    In wealth, peace, and royal estates,  
Attention give whilst I rehearse,  
A modern fact, in jingling verse,  
How party interest strove what it cou'd,  
To profit itself by public blood,  
    But, justly met its merited fate.*

*Let all those Indian traders claim,  
Their just reward, inglorious fame,  
    For vile base and treacherous ends.  
To Pollins, in the spring they sent,  
Much warlike stores, with an intent  
To carry them to our barbarous foes,  
Expecting that no-body dare oppose,  
    A present to their Indian friends.*

*Astonish'd at the wild design,  
Frontier inhabitants combin'd,  
    With brave souls, to stop their career,  
Although some men apostatiz'd,  
Who first the grand attempt advis'd,  
The bold frontiers they bravely stood,  
To act for their King and their country's good,  
    In joint league, and strangers to fear.*

*On March the fifth, in sixty-five,  
Their Indian presents did arrive,  
    In long pomp and cavalcade,  
Near Sidelong Hill, where in disguise,  
Some patriots did their train surprise,  
And quick as lightning tumbled their loads,  
And kindled them bonfires in the woods,  
    And mostly burnt their whole brigade.*

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*At Loudon, when they heard the news,  
They scarcely knew which way to choose,  
For blind rage and discontent;  
At length some soldiers they sent out,  
With guides for to conduct the route,  
And seized some men that were trav'ling there,  
And hurried them into Loudon where  
They laid them fast with one consent.*

*But men of resolution thought,  
Too much to see their neighbors caught,  
For no crime but false surmise;  
Forthwith they join'd a warlike band,  
And march'd to Loudon out of hand,  
And kept the jailors pris'ners there,  
Until our friends enlarged were,  
Without fraud or any disguise.*

*Let mankind censure or commend,  
This rash performance in the end,  
Then both sides will find their account.  
'Tis true no law can justify,  
To burn our neighbors property,  
But when this property is design'd,  
To serve the enemies of mankind,  
It's high treason in the amount.<sup>1</sup>*

WHAT heinous crimes of theft and wanton destruction did this drinking song seek to memorialize, or did more subtle machinations lie below the surface? Evolving out of events which took place on Pennsylvania's frontier in 1765, this song reflected tensions which burst forth in riotous and illegal conduct. Cumberland County's citizens took the law into their own hands to prevent the transportation of potentially dangerous war goods to various Indian tribes prior to the actual declaration of peace ending Pontiac's Rebellion. An analysis of the specific details should reveal the exact nature of the disturbance

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<sup>1</sup> The above song, written by an Irishman, George Campbell, and sung to the tune of "Black Joke," is contained in a brief autobiographical account by the major figure involved in the Cumberland County riot, James Smith. James Smith, *An Account of the Remarkable Occurrences in the Life and Travels of James Smith* (Lexington, Ky., 1799), 62-63 (hereafter cited as Smith, *Autobiography*).

and hopefully something about the phenomenon of rioting in general.<sup>2</sup>

Violence and rioting have been a part of American culture since colonial times. True revolution occurred only in 1776, and some historians even dispute the actual revolutionary nature of that event. While civil and political disturbances have long been an aspect of American history, historians have sought only recently to investigate and analyze the nature of rioting. Recent strife over issues like civil rights, urban conditions, and the Vietnam War has created a demand for an explanation of the nature and the reasons behind the occurrence of violence. Analysis of American culture and traditions to explain these events has included the colonial period as well as the more recent. Analysis of specific riots in the colonial period hopefully will lead to a better understanding of the phenomenon and offer a base for conclusions concerning its general nature.

Since the late nineteenth century historians have studied riots, crowds, and violence.<sup>3</sup> Despite such early interest, however, only in recent years have historians delved into the intricate nature of violence and into colonial riots in particular. Pauline Maier has lately analyzed the coming of the American Revolution through the thoughts and actions of colonial radicals.<sup>4</sup> She concluded that the Revolution emerged naturally from American convictions that apostate British ministers meant to restrict, even to the point of denial, ancient liberties. Failing in attempts to curb such imagined British intentions, the colonists recognized and accepted independence as their last and only chance to protect their natural rights. Maier's interest in the crowd lay with the use that the radicals made of it. She viewed the mob as an extra-legal means to achieve an end not otherwise attainable. Receiving the full approbation of the public, the mob, which sought to uphold the public welfare, achieved its highest glory in the American Revolution.<sup>5</sup>

In true Whig fashion Maier has seen the American Revolution as the culmination of a long mob tradition. However, Maier's conclusions ignored many exceptions that did not fit her theory, and without detailed grass-roots investigation she presupposed that those she included

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2 Richard M. Brown, "Violence and the American Revolution," in Stephen G. Kurtz and James H. Hutson, eds., *Essays on the American Revolution* (New York, 1973), 117-19, suggested the specific topic for investigation and added a list of other riots worthy of research.

3 Gustave LeBon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (New York, 1896).

4 *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Britain, 1765-1776* (New York, 1972).

5 *Ibid.*, 3, 5.

did fit. Closer examination may reveal that superficial tendencies do not entirely explain the causes and nature of riots. Only by analyzing in detail a broad variety of riots and violence which encompass a multitude of varied events can we reach a general understanding of the crowd. This in turn may then clarify the meaning and significance of specific incidents such as the Revolution, which perhaps was not a culmination of violence, but rather one specific example of the phenomenon, extreme only in its scope and consequences.

A general theory of riot must rest on detailed examination of a great variety of individual incidents to establish their similarities and differences. To facilitate this investigation a model of violence may be useful. Although the model is a general theory itself, it is also a tool with which to analyze specific cases, and each examination may in turn refine and clarify the model even further. Fortunately such a model exists in Ted R. Gurr's *Why Men Rebel*.<sup>6</sup> When combined with the ideas of several other historians of the crowd, we have a good framework with which to investigate the Cumberland County riot.

Gurr has attempted to synthesize the general literature on violence, rebellion, and revolution to arrive at a better general theory. He has not tried to provide a ready-made explanation for any given act of political violence. The importance of such a method for the historian lies not so much in whether the events in question fit perfectly into such an outline, but in the fact that he has a point of reference against which he can compare each situation's essential elements.

Gurr outlines three steps in his theory of violence: first, the development of discontent; second, the politicization of that discontent; and last, its realization in violent response to political personalities and objects. Discontent arises from a perception of relative deprivation, defined by Gurr as "a perceived discrepancy between men's value expectations and their value capabilities." Value expectations are the conditions to which people believe they are entitled, while value capabilities are the conditions they believe they can attain under a given set of social conditions. Deprivation-induced discontent brings about a reaction whose violence depends upon the intensity of the discontent. The individual's beliefs concerning the origins of such deprivation, as well as his views of the normative and utilitarian justifiability of violent action, determine the direction of that action.<sup>7</sup>

Gurr's other general conclusions concerning violence provide the

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<sup>6</sup> *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton, 1971).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 12-13.

basic framework within which to examine the specific events. Violence is not an inevitable "manifestation of human nature or consequence of the existence of political community," but a precise response to a set of specific social conditions. The inclination toward collective violence varies directly with the degree to which societies violate expectations concerning "the means and ends of human action." Social attitudes and experiences which condemn violence or emphasize its justifiability and utility can direct and determine the scope and intensity of such violence. Few men resort to violence if they have alternative means to reach their social and material ends.<sup>8</sup>

Since Gurr's conclusions include a wide variety of incidents that fall under the rubric of political violence, the model may be further refined by defining riot and crowd. One historian has suggested an acceptable definition of riot: "those incidents where a number of people group together to enforce their will immediately, by threatening or perpetrating injury to people or property outside of legal procedures and without intending to challenge the general structure of society."<sup>9</sup> Such a definition differentiates riot from revolutionary violence, insurrection, group criminality, civil disobedience, and acts of disruption or symbolic violence.

Participants in riots have long been referred to as the mob or rabble. The word mob apparently originated from the medieval term *rabble*, referring to the lower classes. This in turn was combined with the Latin *mobile vulgus*, the movable or excitable crowd. Shortened to *mobile*, referring to the common people, and then to mob, the word described any tumultuous, lower-class crowd inclined to violence. Apparently the social meaning of mob and mobbish developed during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. An eighteenth-century Britisher described the mob as "forlorn grubs, trades men thrice bankrupt, prentices to journeymen, undertrappers to porters, hungry pettifoggers, bailiffs followers, discarded draymen, hostlers out of place and felons returned from transportation."<sup>10</sup>

George Rudé, well known for his research into the activity of mobs, suggested that the less emotional term crowd replace mob. He took issue with LeBon's almost racist view that the mob consisted of lower-class elements and that it was fickle, destructive, unintelligent,

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 317.

<sup>9</sup> David Grimsted, "Rioting in Its Jacksonian Setting," *American Historical Review* 77 (April 1972): 365.

<sup>10</sup> William A. Smith, "Anglo-Colonial Society and the Mob, 1740-1775" (Ph.D. diss., Claremont Graduate School, 1965), 10-11.

irrational, and animallike. Instead, Rudé considered the crowd as a social phenomenon and a purposive agent of group action. While Rudé has dealt largely with the crowd in a European context, his work suggested that American crowds did not differ radically from those of the Old World.<sup>11</sup>

William Ander Smith, in his study of Anglo-American crowds, noted that mob action, whether colonial or English, cannot be separated from "the social frames of references which give mobbishness its meaning. Without considering the context of events and attitudes in which mob violence took place, the meaning of that violence is largely lost." Rudé, who concurred in this approach, advocated analyzing the crowd in a physical sense as a "direct contact" phenomenon. Smith and Rudé suggested several questions to ask about a specific event so as to avoid stereotyping. What actually took place, and what were the origins and aftermath of the event? How large was the crowd, and whom did it consist of? Who organized and led it? What was the target of the crowd, its aims, and its motives? Did the rioters profess some ideology? Were there any casualties? What were the consequences and historical significance of the event?<sup>12</sup>

Before turning to the Cumberland County riot for specific answers to these questions, it is important to note some findings concerning the traditions of the crowd. There had long been a pattern of mobbing to achieve political ends in England. Such legitimized if not legal activity took place to protect English rights and liberties deemed to be in danger. Society commonly accepted the view that Englishmen should demonstrate if necessary to guarantee their rights. At least some aspects of this notion crossed the Atlantic with the colonists. The question remains, of course, as to what extent did colonial rioters seek to protect the public welfare and common liberties, and to what extent did personal aims and desires motivate them?<sup>13</sup>

Approximately a year after the Paxton riots of 1764 another disturbance, or more accurately, a series of disturbances, occurred in

11 *The Crowd in History, 1730-1848* (New York, 1964), 7-10; Brown, "Violence and the American Revolution," 88; Gordon S. Wood, "A Note on Mobs in the American Revolution," *William and Mary Quarterly* 23 (Oct. 1966) : 637-38.

12 Smith, "Anglo-Colonial Society," 29, 228; Rudé, *The Crowd in History*, 3, 9-11.

13 Rudé, *The Crowd in History*, 228, 230, 238; Smith, "Anglo-Colonial Society," 1, 16, 83-86, 155; Grimsted, "Rioting in Its Jacksonian Setting," 362; E. P. Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century," *Past and Present* 50 (Feb. 1971) : 78-79.

Cumberland County.<sup>14</sup> In both the Paxton and Cumberland events the rioters considered their actions as attempts to remedy problems of provincial defense which they believed the government had failed to deal with. Their motivations were social, not political. Indian attacks had driven many settlers from their homes during the French and Indian War and Pontiac's Rebellion. Although many settlers began to return to the frontier in the fall of 1764 after Pontiac's Rebellion had died down, treaties still awaited finalization. Until the governor should officially reopen the Indian trade in accordance with the king's proclamation of October 1763, which required licensing for all traders, the frontiersmen of Cumberland County refused to allow any potentially dangerous goods to pass to the westward. On March 6, 1765, at Sideling Hill, a group of frontiersmen led by James Smith, a militia officer, attacked a pack train carrying Indian trade items. Smith and his "Black Boys," so called because of their blackened faces, feared that the shipment, largely from the firm of Baynton, Wharton and Morgan, included war goods which might give the Indians enough strength to renew their depredations against the frontier. The settlers viewed this as a clear threat to their personal safety and welfare.<sup>15</sup>

While the exact role of the firm of Baynton, Wharton and Morgan and the culpability of George Croghan remain somewhat in doubt, enough facts emerged to present a fairly clear picture of what happened. Croghan, an Indian agent working closely with Sir William Johnson and General Thomas Gage, intended to meet with various Indians in hopes of ending hostilities. Indian negotiations depended upon the presentation of trade goods as a lubricant for the wheels of peace. Croghan, authorized to buy and transport the necessary goods

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14 For a basic discussion of the Paxton riot, see Brooke Hindle, "The March of the Paxton Boys," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 3 (Oct. 1946): 461-86. Also valuable is James E. Crowley, "The Paxton Disturbance and Ideas of Order in Pennsylvania Politics," *Pennsylvania History* 37 (Oct. 1970): 317-39, which downplays the concern for additional representation in the assembly, emphasizing instead the frontiersmen's concern for their safety from the Indian menace.

15 Governor John Penn to William Johnson, Mar. 21, 1765, in James Sullivan, ed., *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, 14 vols. (Albany, 1921-65), 11: 643 (hereafter cited as Sullivan, *Johnson Papers*); Cadwalader Evans to Benjamin Franklin, Mar. 15, 1765, Leonard W. Labaree, ed., *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, 16 vols. (New Haven, 1959- ), 12: 84; Smith, *Autobiography*, 60-61; Eleanor M. Webster, "Insurrection at Fort Loudon in 1765: Rebellion or Preservation of Peace?" *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine* 47 (Apr. 1964): 129-30. Ms Webster presented an accurately detailed account of the Cumberland County disturbance. However, her concern with the events was to determine whether they were a precursor to the Revolution or if they developed out of particular concerns on the frontier, rather than as a particular example of the phenomenon of rioting.

to the frontier, suggested that a further supply be ready at Fort Pitt in anticipation of a legal reopening of trade. Baynton, Wharton and Morgan readily agreed, hoping to corner the early market. Croghan's involvement beyond this degree remained unclear, although he disavowed any further role, offering in fact to resign his position as Indian agent. General Gage stressed the involvement of the traders rather than Croghan: "I am of opinion, when you have Examined into this Affair, that it will be found the Traders had hopes of getting first to Market, by Stealing up their Goods before the Trade was legally permitted." Regardless of Croghan's exact role, the frontiersmen viewed the transport of nearly £ 3,000 of Indian trade goods as a direct threat and responded accordingly.<sup>16</sup>

James Smith and a number of followers ambushed the pack train near Sideling Hill. They allowed the pack train drivers to "take [their] private property and immediately retire," after which they burned the trade goods, including a number of blankets, tomahawks, and scalping knives. Following the attack, a series of events maintained tensions on the frontier at a high level for several months.<sup>17</sup>

At the request of Robert Callendar, an army provisions subcontractor in charge of the pack train, Lieutenant Grant, commanding part of the British Forty-second Regiment stationed at Fort Loudon, sent out a thirteen-man patrol led by Sergeant Leonard McGlashan to salvage what goods they could. Shortly after arriving at the scene of the attack, approximately fifty frontiersmen descended upon McGlashan demanding the release of two men previously captured. McGlashan refused and captured several more men before returning to the fort. On March 9 Smith and a group of armed men appeared before the fort and demanded the release of the captured men. While waiting for Lieutenant Grant to decide what to do, they apprehended several British soldiers. Grant agreed to an exchange of prisoners but refused to return their weapons, apparently on the orders of Colonel Henry Bouquet. This action caused hard feelings and would create more trouble at a later date.

On May 7 thirty frontiersmen attacked the horses and drivers of a trader named Joseph Spears. Spears had deposited his goods at Fort Loudon for safe keeping, but the frontiersmen killed five of his horses

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<sup>16</sup> Johnson to Penn, Apr. 12, June 7, 1765, *Pennsylvania Archives*, 104 vols. (Harrisburg, 1838-1935), 1st ser., 4: 215-16, 226-27; quote from Gage to Penn, Mar. 30, 1765, *ibid.*, 214-15.

<sup>17</sup> Smith, *Autobiography*, 61; Wilbur S. Nye, *James Smith, Early Cumberland Valley Patriot* (Carlisle, Pa., 1969), 14.



and severely flogged several of his men. One escapee returned to the fort for help, and Sergeant McGlashan again rode out to give chase to the rioters. In a subsequent exchange of fire, a frontiersman, James Brown, received a bullet wound in the thigh, but he was the only casualty. Smith's brother, William, a justice of the peace, swore out a warrant for the arrest of McGlashan for shooting a civilian, but little came of it. Three days later approximately 150 rioters, led by James Smith and three magistrates, demanded to search Spears' goods. Lieutenant Grant refused to allow them to enter the fort, fearing the crowd might destroy the goods. The magistrates warned Grant that they were not subject to any army jurisdiction and that they would allow no goods to move through the country without a pass signed by a justice.<sup>18</sup>

Still rankled by the loss of their weapons, James Smith and four armed men kidnapped Lieutenant Grant on May 19. They kept him in the woods all night, and after a threat to carry him off to North Carolina, Grant agreed to give a bond for £ 40 that he would return the muskets. On June 6 the governor officially reopened the Indian trade, since Sir William Johnson and George Croghan, Indian agents, finally had negotiated the peace treaties. With the resumption of trade, Smith and his men stopped inspecting goods.

Despite the quiet which descended upon the frontier, Grant continued to refuse to return the captured weapons, and discontent finally burst forth again in November. On the sixteenth Smith commanded several parties which surrounded Fort Loudon in an attempt to capture Grant and McGlashan. The following day they laid siege to the fort, firing continuously at the soldiers within and demanding the return of their weapons. Lieutenant Grant knew that his regiment was scheduled to move to Fort Pitt in order to avoid further confrontation, so he readily accepted William McDowell's offer to mediate in the affair. McDowell gave a receipt for "Five Rifles and Four Smooth Guns, which was taken off the Country People," which he planned to retain until the governor made known his pleasure. Eventually the frontiersmen received their weapons. Smith in turn agreed to pay Grant £ 500 if he and his men delayed or insulted anyone going to or from the fort. When Grant's garrison, escorted by Ensign Herring and thirty men

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18 Deposition of McGlashan, May 6, 1765, *Pa. Archives*, 1st ser., 4: 233-35; deposition of Lt. Grant, 1765, *ibid.*, 220-21; deposition of John Shelby, 1765, *ibid.*, 222-23; Lt. Col. Reid to Gage, June 4, 1765, *Council Minutes*, in *Colonial Records of Pennsylvania*, 16 vols. (Philadelphia, 1838-53), 9: 269 (hereafter cited as *Council Minutes*); Smith, *Autobiography*, 62-63.

departed for Fort Pitt, the rioting in Cumberland County came to an end.<sup>19</sup>

Government reaction to the initial rioting was limited and had negligible results. Governor Penn traveled to Carlisle in the early spring with the attorney general and two council members to investigate the disturbance. He dispatched several warrants and ordered the local sheriffs to serve them, but the law officers returned with the information that the offenders had all left their homes. A grand jury, on investigating several witnesses at the next court, found insufficient evidence to convict anybody. Penn returned to Philadelphia having accomplished little. He next issued a proclamation on June 4 relating to the incident: "I do hereby strictly charge and command all persons whatsoever, so assembled forthwith to disperse themselves, and desist from all such illegal proceedings and practices, as they will answer the Contrary at their Peril." He further urged all magistrates and sheriffs "to use their utmost Endeavors at all times to quell and suppress all riots, tumults, and disorderly proceedings." Penn concluded by threatening to use royal troops if necessary to quell the disturbances, but his threat was unnecessary because the official reopening of the Indian trade ended all troubles until November. Thus, government action had proved ineffectual.<sup>20</sup>

The governor summed up the government's reaction well in a letter to Thomas Penn in London.

I shall take every step in my power to bring to Justice those who have been concerned in committing the audacious Outrage; tho' I despair of Success, through the extreme weakness of our Government and the resolution of those desparate [sic] people, who it seems are determined at all events to oppose the authority of the Magistrates.

Thomas Penn's reply confirmed his recognition of the situation. Referring to Governor Penn's duty to write to Lord Hillsborough, he said, "whenever you do don't say a word of the weakness of Government, but that you have taken every legal method to do the Business whatever it is without Success." Thus, official reaction at both county and colony levels was either minimal or nonexistent.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Reid to Gage, June 1, 1765, *Council Minutes*, 9: 268-69; deposition of Lt. Grant, 1765, receipt of McDowell, Nov. 18, 1765, agreement of Smith and Samuel Owens, Nov. 18, 1765, Lt. Grant to Reid, Nov. 22, 1765, Capt. William Grant to Reid, Nov. 25, 1765, *Pa. Archives*, 1st ser., 4: 221-22, 245-48; Nye, *James Smith*, 21.

<sup>20</sup> Penn to Johnson, May 23, 1765, Sullivan, *Johnson Papers*, 11: 746; Penn to Gage, June 28, 1765, proclamation of Penn, June 4, 1765, Penn to Cumberland County justices, June 4, 27, 1765, *Pa. Archives*, 4th ser., 3: 297-305.

<sup>21</sup> Penn to Thomas Penn, Mar. 16, 1765, Thomas Penn to Penn, June 8, 1765, *Thomas Penn Papers* (microfilm copy, Lehigh University), roll 9; Webster, "Insurrection at Fort Loudon," 134-35.

Historically the conflict in Cumberland County involved no major changes. The frontiersmen had made their position known by their actions, a position similarly expressed in the Paxton riots of 1764. Peace with the Indians in the middle of 1765 brought tranquility to the Pennsylvania frontier, with the exception of the November incident.

Before finishing with the specific events themselves, we must turn to the question of discontent. Gurr noted that the first step in the occurrence of violence was the development of discontent arising from a perception of relative deprivation. His model held that a high level of deprivation-induced discontent would lead to extreme violence. Since the Sideling Hill level of violence was relatively low and took place as rioting rather than rebellion or revolt, the participants' discontent was probably not extreme.

Although those participating in the riot expressed their discontent, precise measure of its level is difficult. Nonetheless they did feel their discontent clearly enough to take certain positive actions in an attempt to remedy it. Thus, while Gurr's model might broadly include almost any incident, it does apply to the specific details of this event. The crowd's target — essentially the third and final step in Gurr's outline of violence — of course has a close link to the politicization of the discontent. The Cumberland County "Black Boys" actually struck at two targets, the pack trains and the Forty-second Regiment at Fort Loudon. They attacked the trade shipments because they believed they contained Indian goods, and they skirmished with the king's troops, whose actions, Smith and his men believed, went beyond proper authority. There had even been a rumor that Robert Callendar had offered Grant's men a reward if they would go to Sideling Hill to gather up the remaining goods.<sup>22</sup> The politicization of discontent directly resulted in the crowd's choice of target; it focused on the people and the institutions which the frontiersmen believed responsible for their discontent.

The Sideling Hill affairs fit well within the context of Gurr's model of violence. A definite process existed of rising discontent, politicization of that discontent, and realization of it in some form of violent action. However, the disturbance must still be examined in light of the questions suggested by Rudé and Smith to round out a complete understanding of the nature of the crowd and the riot.

Perhaps the first questions should concern the membership and

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<sup>22</sup> Webster, "Insurrection at Fort Loudon," 136-39; Lt. Grant to Gage, Aug. 24, Sept. 16, 1765, *Pa. Archives*, 1st ser., 4: 232, 240.

size of the crowd. It consisted of local frontiersmen and varied in size from one incident to the next, ranging from as few as five in the kidnapping of Lieutenant Grant to as many as several hundred in the siege of Fort Loudon in November. Evidence on the exact membership beyond the leaders themselves is spotty, but presumably most frontiersmen held at least a minimal amount of property in land, suggesting that the crowd consisted of more than a mere "mob."<sup>23</sup>

Closely allied to the question of the crowd's membership is the composition of its organizers and leaders. During the nine months of disturbances in Cumberland County several well-known and respected citizens led the crowd. James Smith, who contrived to organize most of the incidents, was a colonial militia officer. His brother William was a justice of the peace, and he also provided legal advice for several crowds. His refusal to arrest Lieutenant Grant's kidnappers suggested his involvement and leadership in a reverse sense. Two other magistrates, Reyonald and Allison, joined him in his actions at various times. One William Duffield also took part in leading several groups of the "Black Boys," but his background and position in society is unclear. After the withdrawal of the Forty-second Regiment, Captain Grant, the commander at Fort Pitt, wrote concerning William Smith, "In this affair, Justice Smith proves himself to be a most Atrocious Scoundrel."<sup>24</sup>

Leadership and organization of the crowd came from local members of upper political, military, and social echelons in society. In several instances leaders may have arisen on the spot, but more normally members of the community's elite planned the course of action. Apparently the inarticulate or at least average participant followed the leadership of those men who were normally active and at the forefront of public activity in untroubled times as well.

Beyond the questions of participation and leadership, and involving Pauline Maier's conclusions, are those of the nature and results of military and government responses to the disturbances. While government response was minimal, as noted above, military force did play a major role in the riot. Lieutenant Grant's Highlanders of the Forty-second Regiment involved themselves in the affair and intensified hard

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<sup>23</sup> Reid to Gage, June 4, 1765, *Council Minutes* 9: 269-70; deposition of Lt. Grant, 1765, Lt. Grant to Reid, Nov. 22, 1765, extract from Capt. Grant to Reid, Nov. 25, 1765, *Pa. Archives*, 1st ser., 4: 221-22, 246-48.

<sup>24</sup> Reid to Gage, June 4, 1765, *Council Minutes*, 9: 270; depositions of Lt. Grant, Shelby, and McGlashan, 1765, *Pa. Archives*, 1st ser., 4: 220-23, 233-34; Capt. Grant to Reid, Nov. 25, 1765, *ibid.*, 247-48; Webster, "Insurrection at Fort Loudon," 129.

feelings among the frontiersmen. The use of force by the crown's troops in protecting the trade goods and chasing the rioters incensed the frontiersmen and in part focused their violence upon the Highlanders. Hostility against the regiment occurred only because they apparently condoned the transport of the trade goods — a step beyond the limits of military authority. In contrast, the commander at Fort Bedford, forty miles to the westward, noted that "the Inhabitants have used me and the Troops under my Command extremely well, and upon every Occasion show their readiness in Serving us." Grant and McGlashan in particular experienced the wrath of Smith's men because of their obvious leadership roles in the affair. Grant's kidnapping and Justice Smith's warrant for McGlashan's arrest were only two of the most obvious results. Although prior to November Grant had shown little in the way of restraint, his remarkable presence of mind during the two-day siege of Fort Loudon probably prevented serious casualties. His troops remained well within their walls and did not fire on the frontiersmen; thus he avoided possible tragedy. The only frontiersman injured was James Brown, earlier wounded in the thigh by McGlashan. Although the "Black Boys" whipped several drivers and destroyed various goods and horses, truly serious conflict resulting in human casualties and death did not occur.<sup>25</sup>

Finally, the question of ideology becomes important, although personal interest was the primary motivating force underlying the frontiersmen's action. A concern for society's welfare entered the picture only when it dovetailed with the personal concern of the rioters. Frontier safety ultimately involved the whole colony, but initially only the citizens of Cumberland County. Beyond personal concerns, however, there did exist the tacit acceptance of one overriding ideology which had grown and been strengthened during the eighteenth century, finding its articulation in various incidents and in the words and writings of American colonists. As noted earlier, colonials had a traditional concern for rights and liberties, and they believed that the government had a duty to protect the individual in his rights. The

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25 Reid to Gage, June 1, 4, 1765, *Council Minutes*, 9: 268-69; deposition of McGlashan, Lt. Grant to Reid, Nov. 22, 1765, *Pa. Archives*, 1st ser., 4: 234, 246-47; Kirby J. Martin, "The Return of the Paxton Boys and the Historical State of the Pennsylvania Frontier, 1764-1774," *Pennsylvania History* 38 (Apr. 1971): 120-21; Crowley, "Paxton Disturbance," 318-25; Webster, "Insurrection at Fort Loudon," 132, 136-39; John Shy, *Toward Lexington: The Role of the British Army in the Coming of the American Revolution* (Princeton, 1965), 206-209, quoted from a letter from Lt. Nathaniel McCulloch to Bouquet, Mar. 28, 1765, *Bouquet Papers*.

ideology was not revolutionary even by 1765, but when legal avenues for the redress of grievances became closed, the system had to give way at some point. This rupture often took place in the form of crowd activity and rioting.

Can any conclusions be drawn from the Cumberland County disturbances concerning the general nature of the crowd and the riot? Certain tentative conclusions do emerge, although work in other colonies or in different time periods may alter or impose limits on these findings.<sup>26</sup> Gurr's three-step model of violence has validity for the Cumberland County events. The frontiersmen directed violence toward what they perceived as the source of their discontent, and utility and justifiability together in the eyes of the participants provided a rationale for the steps taken. Knowing full well the illegal nature of the actions taken, James Smith justified himself on the grounds that the government had failed in its duty to protect him and his neighbors. Thus, the specific course of events directed violence toward a clear-cut target. Participants justified their violence on the grounds of its utility and ultimate legality for the achievement of ends they conceived to be proper.

The failure to attempt prosecutions and, when attempted, the failure to achieve convictions, tentatively suggested the government's weakness or its lack of intense desire to achieve such ends. However, it would be going too far to suggest that government generally condoned extralegal activity as a means of reaching ends which, as a legal institution, it could not openly approve. Rather once violent activity died down, prosecution of the participants would only further enrage those involved without adding to the public benefit. This particular riot may be deemed successful in the sense that the "Black Boys" succeeded in protecting the frontier and escaped punishment for their illegal actions in so doing.

Not long ago Gordon Wood suggested that the American crowd bore a striking resemblance to the European crowd described by George Rudé. The evidence herein suggests that, indeed, the crowd

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<sup>26</sup> Preliminary research into several other eighteenth-century Pennsylvania riots included in Richard M. Brown's list further supports the validity of these generalizations. Those riots included a Philadelphia tavern brawl in 1704 involving several members of the local gentry over the question of militia and watch duty for the city; a violent protest by local citizens residing near the Schuylkill River over the destruction of their fishing nets and weirs purportedly obstructing navigation on the river; and two election-day riots, one in Philadelphia in 1742, the other in York County in 1750, both of which centered around the clash of rival political factions.

rioted for precise objects and that, while it was “violent, impulsive, easily stirred by rumor, and quick to panic,” it was not “fickle, peculiarly irrational, or generally given to bloody attacks on persons.”<sup>27</sup> In the final analysis a general pattern delineating some fundamental nature and process will likely emerge upon the examination of a variety of cases, irrespective of nation or location. Violence does not occur without reason and therefore should be understandable. However, only considerable research into the specific facts and social context of many incidents will reveal the complex nature of this phenomenon.

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<sup>27</sup> Wood, “A Note on Mobs,” 638; Rudé, *The Crowd in History*, 254, 257.

## THE BICENTENNIAL

One of the most thought-provoking views of America's bicentennial is presented by Howard H. Peckham in the 1974-75 annual report of the William L. Clements Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan:

"Our national past, like our personal childhood, has a powerful appeal . . . . Nostalgia, unfortunately, invites selective remembering. We recall the glories, not the disgraces; the achievements, not the failures; the strides and not the stumbles; the problems that were solved, not those that continue to haunt us. This rainbow past, the 'good old days' of fond memory, involves so much selection as to be self-deceptive. It is the past filtered through a stained-glass window rather than honestly reflected in a mirror. We want the Bicentennial to bring the past into focus, with a breadth and depth that will require us to face up to it. The good and the bad are not separated but intertwined. Without the whole view, indicative of where we have fallen short of our 1775 aims, there is little we can learn. To be sure, ideals are not easily achieved, and faith demands that our reach should exceed our grasp, as Browning said. Or, as Frost phrased it, we 'have promises to keep.' Now is the time to tally the score and determine how well we have done."